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AUTHOR Rubel, Robert J.
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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter focuses solely on changes in student crimes in the period from 1950 to 1975. A number of observations are made about student violence. First, assaults against teachers have increased sharply in the past 25 years in absolute numbers, but not in the percent of teachers assaulted. Further, "assault" is so loosely defined that no clear picture of changes in the intensity of assaults can be developed. Second, fires in schools represent the single most costly act students can perpetrate; costs from fires are increasing more rapidly than the value of all school property. Third, vandalism probably increased in this country up to the early 1970s, and has declined since that time in both cost and frequency, but may have increased in intensity. Fourth, estimates of the costs of crimes occurring in schools varies widely, depending on the group collecting the information and the methodology used for computing the figures. The paper concludes with discussions of probable future actions of pupils, of local schools, and of school security offices. (Author/MLF)

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TRENDS IN STUDENT VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM 1950 TO 1975: A HISTORICAL VIEW*‡

Robert J. Rubel

*This paper is drawn from one chapter of the book, The Unruly School: Disorders, Disruptions, and Crimes by Robert J. Rubel, Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books, D. C. Heath and Co., 1977. For more detailed and thorough analysis and discussion of points raised here, readers are referred to that work.

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ABSTRACT

From 1950 to 1975 the nature and extent of pupil misbehaviors in public secondary schools changed in many ways. To facilitate discussion of those changes, pupil misconduct was divided into three broad categories: noncriminal disorders, group disruptions, and crimes. This paper focuses soley on changes in student crimes. Crimes in public secondary schools became an issue of national concern beginning in the late 1960s as the costs of student vandalism rose and as group disruptions occurred on secondary school campuses. Public attention was directed to student violence in schools. In this paper a number of observations are made about student violence. First, assaults against teachers have increased sharply in the past 25 years in absolute numbers, but not in the percent of teachers assaulted. Further, "assault" is so loosely defined that no clear picture of changes in the intensity of assaults can be developed. Second, fires in schools represent the single most costly act students can perpetrate; costs from fires are increasing more rapidly than the value of all school property. Third, vandalism probably increased in this country up to the early 1970's, and has declined since that time in both cost and frequency, but may have increased in intensity. Fourth, estimates of the costs of crimes occurring in schools in the United States varies widely, depending upon the group collecting the information and the methodology used for computing the figures. The paper concludes with discussions of probable future actions of pupils, of local schools, and of school security offices.

Introduction

The past generation has seen a radical change in the educational climate of public schools in the United States, and especially a great increase in all kinds of unwanted behavior by students. Not only is there much more violence than there used to be, but much of what we now take for granted would have been shocking 20 years ago. Not only has the frequency of violence increased since the 1950s, but the character of that violence has undergone drastic changes. The actions and viewpoints of school administrators in dealing with violence have changed as well, and there is some indication that these altered viewpoints and actions may have influenced student violence, or may influence it in the future.

We have all observed or read about increasing violence in the schools. But to prove such increases, to collect data that give a quantitative assessment of these changes, is extremely difficult: the methods by which incidents of disruption are recorded are not uniform; some offenses go unreported, while others are overreported; and reporting procedures involve overlapping categories that preclude drawing hard, precise conclusions from the available data. It is difficult even to verify that school

violence has in fact increased; the available data allow at best an incomplete biopsy since the kinds of data recorded in one school may not be recorded in another.

Despite these difficulties, however, data are examined here, and logical findings are offered that validate intuitive observations of what is occuring in our schools.

Significance and Scope of this Study

Significance

As people who deal with students and with the problems of school administration know very well, the climate within schools in nearly every community in the United States has changed swiftly and dramatically in the last few decades. The attitudes of students toward authority have certainly changed--indeed, they seem to be changing all the time. The attitudes of teachers and administrators have changed too, both because a new generation now fills these posts and as a response to changing acts and attitudes of students.

However certain one may be that change has taken place, it is anything but easy to study those changes in a definitive and quantitive way. We can see that violence and the threat of violence by students in public schools have increased substantially in 25 years, but it is not always

easy to pin down the ways in which that violence has grown. Are we facing new kinds of violence? Are incidents of violence occurring more often? Is there more or less unreported violence? Are the schools themselves unwittingly either encouraging or diminishing violence through administrative actions? The answers to such questions are obscured by often conflicting or overlapping defintions and are severly limited by the different methods by which relevant data have been recorded and presented. The same difficulties arise when one tries to analyze other crimes committed by students that may almost destroy the school's ability to teach.

Although a great deal has been written about students, schools, and crimes, there has never been a study above survey quality showing how serious student misbehaviors have changed over time. Also, there appears to be no study showing how data on topics related to students and schools may affect the interpretation of data pertaining directly to student crimes. This paper has been written in an effort to help to fill these gaps solely by examining published historical and statistical data, without conducting field research.

The significance of this approach is that a researcher or school administrator, armed primarily with the historical perspectives provided here and warned about the possible

weakness in statistics that are continually produced (as warned here), can develop conclusions about specific schools or specific school districts by noting trends in these schools as they have changed (and continue to change) over time.

Scope, Definitions, and Limits

The primary scope, definitions, and limits of this study are as follows:

1) The period of study is from 1950 to 1975.
2) Crime is an act forbidden by public law that, if committed, can cause an adult to be arrested.[1]
3) Violence includes acts or threats of acts, implicit or explicit.
4) Although the primary emphasis assumes an urban school system, the only available national data are aggregated to include all schools. Where this affects analysis, caveats have been provided.
5) The study is not concerned with the analysis of specific programs to combat youthful misbehaviors,

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[1] Although it is stipulated here that the offense must be of the type that could cause the perpetrator to be arrested, it is not required that the perpetrator actually be booked or convicted of that criminal act before such an act of student misbehavior is counted as a "crime."

although some programs may be mentioned as examples of reasonable solutions.[2]

6) The study does not develop theories proposing to explain why individual students misbehave; however, some conclusions are reached about why overall student misbehavior changes at certain times.

Public Opinion and Concern

Background

The issue of crime in public secondary schools is a controversial one. The atmosphere created by students committing criminal acts against each other or against the school staff is unwholesome and is the basis for great concern on the part of the public, the Congress, and arms of the government such as the Departments of Justice and of Health, Education, and Welfare. Criminal acts in secondary schools differ from noncriminal disorders in two obvious ways: first, perpetrators are subject to arrest and prosecution; second, the violence which often accompanies such acts can contribute to schoolwide feelings of fear for personal safety. Also, unlike the disorderly violations

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[2] For extensive work in the area of collecting and categorizing school programs aimed at preventing school crime and disorder, see Marvin, Connally, McCann, Temkin, and Henning (1976).

of school rules, criminal acts which are subject to prosecution are generally much more clearly defined in the minds of those involved. Although there may be mitigating circumstances surrounding an assault which ultimately lead the school administration not to press charges, both the assaulting pupil and the school staff know that aggravated assault is a criminal act, and prosecution for it will cause the youth some degree of trouble and inconvenience.[3]

Understanding school crime data requires an understanding the implications of the formation of school security offices throughout the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is entirely possible that these offices affected the ways data were collected in such a fashion as to have altered the public impression of the nature and extent of the problem.

One of the primary caveats when dealing with crime statistics, such as those gathered by the FBI, is that changes in reporting formats or reporting conditions over

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[3] The point to be made here is that, in the case of the commission of a criminal act, the administrator of the school must make a primary decision whether or not to prosecute the offender, in cases involving violations of school rules (disorders), however, school disciplinary responses may be affected to a much greater extent by the mood of the school administrator and by various socioeconomic and situational variables.

time distort the real picture of the incidence of a given crime. In the case of school crimes, there are examples of just such distortions. From 1950 to about 1968 no nationally comparable records of aggregate student crimes were kept by school districts, whereas beginning in about 1971 and continuing to 1975 extensive nationally comparable records were kept. Comparisons between these periods, therefore, are very risky, and simple comparisons of percentages of crime increases (as is occasionally done in informal studies on this topic) will produce tremendously skewed figures.

Expression of Public Concern

Although there has undoubtedly always been some crime in schools, it did not become prevalent enough to represent a threat to the educational climate of the school until the late 1960s. Articles appearing in U.S. News and World Report (1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976) expressing concern over student crimes committed in schools are particularly notable. These articles reflected their time, a period when public concern was shifting from disruptions, such as riots and sit-ins, to actual crimes. The series of articles of particular interest for the purposes of this paper begins with a September 2, 1968

article, and ends--slightly outside the study period--with a January, 1976 article.

In the September 2, 1968 article, while it was not clear that discussions of violence were meant to include secondary schools, neither were those schools clearly excluded. The November 17, 1969 "article" was really only a small blurb, serving just to notify the public that the Senate was becoming sensitive to problems of crimes in the schools. At this point, 1969, only the vaguest hints existed that violence would be a serious issue for the next six years. The January 26, 1970 two-column work represented the magazine's reaction to the release of the Senate study comparing school crime in 1964 and 1968. The important point about this article was that it was not an independent one on school crime and violence by the magazine - that came later. The January 4, 1971 article really surveyed violence in general and only briefly touched on high schools. The November 22, 1971 work, however, directly dealt with violence in schools.

For this study, the November 22, 1971 article was very important, for it represented a new direction in U.S. News' coverage of schools with problems of crime and violence. For the first time, the staff of the magazine had become

involved in investigative reporting. It was the first article of the series that expressed serious alarm over the extent of school violence; however, it treated the subject as exclusively a problem of large-city schools, disregarding growing problems of school crimes in suburban communities. This article marked the start of a transition between merely reporting the findings of other research and seriously treating the problems of crime and violence in public schools as worthy of investigative reporting; the next article completed that transition.

On April 10, 1973, a "background" article appeared that astutely surveyed the wide variety of types of school security devices and approaches available for counteracting school crime and violence. The author of this article noted, for example, that the problem of crime in Los Angeles was so severe that the security budget had grown to 2.75 million dollars and that the school district had to hire 235 security agents in order to control crimes in the schools. On June 24, 1974, U.S. News printed an article presenting estimates of the cost of school crime nationally. Although not credited to him, these cost - estimates were those developed by Dukiet (1973). In addition to the cost data, the article outlined the problem of serious student mis-

behaviors on a national level.

The progression of these articles is interesting as a mirror of public concern. Whereas the April 16, 1973, piece said, in effect, "This is how school security is going to handle the problem," and the June 24, 1974, work said "OK - here's who security should focus on controlling," the next published article (April 14, 1975) said, "Here we go: We're gonna crack down now!" Yet nine months later the January 26, 1976 piece lamented that, although "officials crack down, ...nothing seems to work" (p. 52).

Certainly it would stretch credulity to suggest that the editors of U.S. News and World Report intentionally serialized in this way, however, changes in perceptions of problems of school crime and violence are clearly illustrated by the changes in the magazine's attitude.

Expression of Public Opinion

A useful supplement to the indications of trends that these articles provided is the "Gallup Polls of Public Attitudes Toward Education." These polls began in 1969 and appeared annually thereafter (Elam, 1973; Gallup, 1974, 1975). According to Gallup, in every year but 1971, "discipline" was the public's foremost concern. "Discipline," however, had been an elusive term, and the polls seemed to use it generally when referring to pupil misbehaviors.

As the public's concerns became more specific, the polls reflected that specificity. For example, vandalism and apathy appeared in the 1971 survey as issues independent of "discipline." Also, problems of integration and desegregation--very likely violence-related issues--were separated out of the general "discipline-problems" category. Indeed, while in 1971 and 1973 three out of the top five public concerns focused on pupil misbehaviors, not until 1974 were there clear indications that attitudes about crimes in schools were shifting.

The sixth poll contained two questions obviously reflecting Gallup's quest for clarification of the kinds of in-school misbehaviors that upset the public: one about gang activity, and one about stealing. The poll found that concern about stealing was very evenly distributed among regions of the U.S. (though it was slightly higher in the West) and was easily anticipated in relation to community size: the larger the community, the greater the concern over stealing in schools. In regard to gangs, the results held few surprises: concern was greater in large urban centers than in suburban or rural areas. Not until the 1975 poll did the public clearly separate concern over "discipline" from concern over "crime." In that poll,

4 percent of the sample considered "crime/vandalism/ stealing" to be among the "biggest problems with which the public schools in this country must deal." (Gallup, 1975).

Although it is not absolutely certain why the Gallup Polls did not indicate changes in public attitudes about pupil misbehaviors in schools more precisely, a theory may be postulated. Since changes from discipline issues to disruptions to crimes were gradual, the public having scant exposure to or interest in the subtleties of these shifts, responded in only the most general terms. "Discipline," from the time of the first poll in 1969 to 1975 took on any number of meanings--and did not have the same precise meaning in any two years. The polls, then, did not render specific year-of-change information on shifts in the public's attitudes toward student crime in public schools, although in a general sense they support the findings of this paper.

The most important point of this review of media coverage of public opinion is that such coverage encouraged closer inspection of local school problems, which in turn contributed to greater media coverage, which ultimately became translated into even greater public concern. Although it is inappropriate to suggest that the media overstated or

overplayed the problem of crime in secondary schools, the reader must recognize that this contaminating variable does strongly affect comparisons of this topic between the pre-1970 and post-1970 period.

Close Analysis of Crimes

Unfortunately, only three crime categories offered themselves to scrutiny. These were student assaults against teachers, fires, and vandalism. Analysis of the cost of school-based crime to the nation could also be undertaken and is included.

Teachers Assaulted

Although the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports presents data on the total number of assaults by juveniles aged 15-17, there is no way to determine the victim, location, or intensity of the assaults. Indeed, the only studies specifically focusing on assaulted teachers have been the National Education Association's "Teacher Opinion Polls."[4]

The "Teacher Opinion Polls" question of whether "I was attacked this year by a student" appeared in 1956 and in later years, and thus is particularly relevant to this study. The results are shown in Table 1.

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[4] "The Teacher Opinion Polls" are available through the Research Division of the National Educational Association, Washington, D.C.

TABLE I

Teacher Assaults from 1956 to 1975

Year	Percent assaulted [a]	Total number teachers [b,c]	Number teachers assaulted (est) [c]
1955-56	1.6	1,141	18.3
1971-72	2.0	2,063	41.3
1972-73	2.2	2,103	46.3
1973-74	3.0	2,138	64.1
1974-75	2.4	2,165	52.0

[a] From National Education Association: Research Division, "Teacher Opinion Polls."

[b] From U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: National Center for Education Statistics.

[c] Numbers in these columns are in thousands.

In interesting contrast to the expected findings, there was little change in the percent of teachers assaulted over the period of 1956 to 1975. Since that the polls were conducted by developing a probability sample of the nation's schools and then selecting one of every 1,000 teachers, the results shown on Table I are a fair representation of the extent of pupil assaults of teachers in the country over time. Although a change from 1.6 percent assaults in 1956 to 2.4 percent assaults in 1975 is a 75 percent increase, the overall picture is better seen against a backdrop clearly

showing the percent of teachers assaulted in relation to 100 percent of the teachers. This is shown in Figure I.

From these data, and from reviewing numerous articles on teacher assaults, the following conclusions can be drawn. "Assault" was loosely defined and included many cases of "hands-on" in some form or other.[5] An unknown but presumably significant number of assaults against teachers were committed by outsiders, notably parents with some grievance, or by older pupils who previously attended the school. Pupils did not often assault teachers, and then they did, it was often judged objectively to be the result of some kind of provocation by the teacher. Junior high school students (grades 7-9) reported by far the greatest number of assaults against teachers.[6]

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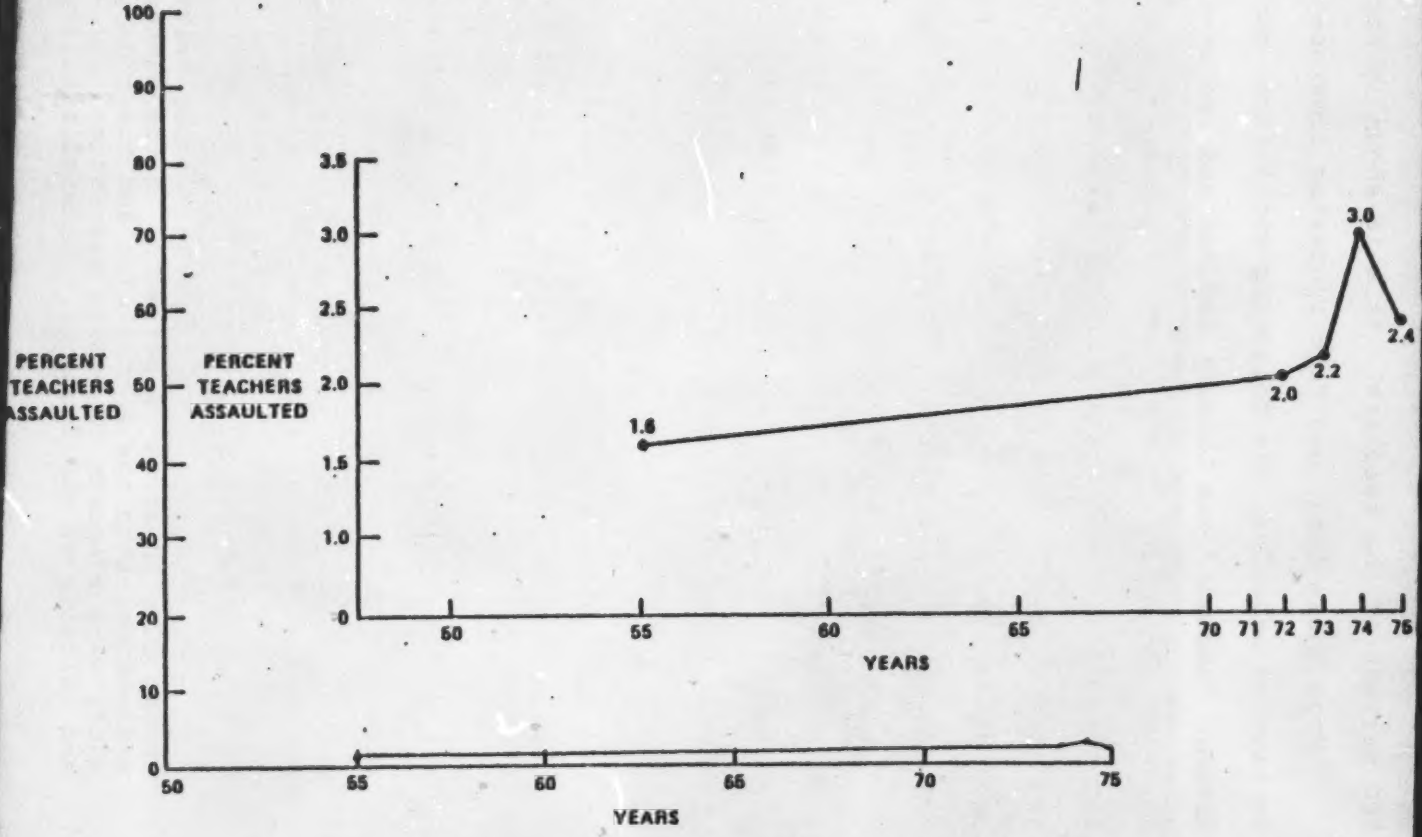
[5] Assaults in elementary schools are different in degree from assaults in secondary schools. Although that observation is elementary, what is less obvious is that greater numbers of less serious("hands-on") assaults get counted in the lower grades than in secondary schools. This distinction is relevant here, since the NEA Polls were sent to a sample of <u>all</u> teachers.

[6] This last conclusion is an area ripe for research. Only one study of assaults was found. This study was prepared by the security office of a very large school district and is confidential. The data, however, show that for grades K-12, fully 50 percent of the assaults were by pupils in grades 7, 8, and 9. For grades 7-12, the number rose to about 70 percent. In the author's estimation, both the sample size and the time period of study were adequate to ensure statistical reliability and validity of the findings. Generalizability is unknown.

PIGURE I



* SOURCE: NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION'S "TEACHER OPINION POLLS OF PUPIL BEHAVIOR"

Fires

Fire data national in scope and focused on schools were available only through the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in Boston. That Association developed national estimates showing the relative order of magnitude of fire losses from each of a number of causes, and indicating year-to-year trends. While these data were reasonable approximations based on experiences in typical states, the Association cautioned that specific figures should not be taken as exact records of occurrences in any category. Figures, as we use them, serve only to indicate gross trends.[7]

A great deal can be learned from data provided by the Association. First, the annual costs of school fires[8] climbed 525 percent over the period of this study, in terms

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[7] The above caveat, and permission to use these data, were given in a letter dated April 29, 1976, from John Ottoson, Director of the Fire Analysis Department of the National Fire Protection Association. Data presented either in the text or in the charts which came from the NFPA may not be reused without correct citation and a letter of authorization from them. The NFPA has been particularly helpful and cooperative in providing counsel and information, and the author thanks them for that.

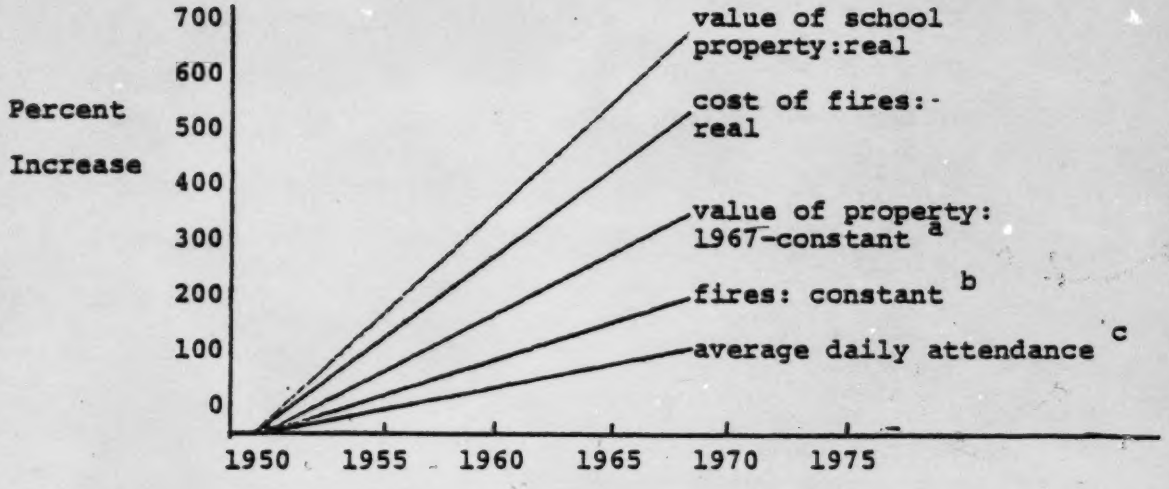
[8] Until 1965 "school fires" included fires in postsecondary institutions as well as in schools offering grades K-12. This deemphasizes current high costs of fires which are limited to elementary and secondary schools. Base figures up to 1965 <u>really</u> should be lower when compared with data after that date. This limiting of the defined category also provides insight into the period (mid-1960s) when public school fires became enough of an issue in their own right to warrant separate counting.

of actual recorded costs (from 17 million dollars in 1950 to 106.2 million dollars in 1974). Using Consumer Price Index adjustments, however, the increase in terms of 1967-constant dollars for that period was only 179 percent (23.5 million dollars in 1950 to 65.9 million dollars in 1974). Consideration must also be given to the fact that the value of all school property also increased in this period: The actual dollar increase in property value from 13.4 billion dollars to 102.1 billion dollars was 662 percent; in terms of 1967-constant dollars, however, the value of all school property has increased 240 percent (18.3 billion dollars in 1950 to 63.3 billion dollars in 1975). The conclusion, then, is that the adjusted value of schools over time increased more rapidly than did the adjusted value of costs of fires over the same period. (See Figure 2 for a graphic display of this last phenomenon.)

The gross increase of 859 percent in numbers of fires reported between 1950 and 1975 was <u>essentially ten times greater</u> than the 86 percent increase in the average daily

FIGURE 2

Percentage increases in school values, student attendance, and school fires.



a Derived by applying the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to school value data provided from HEW's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

b Derived by applying CPI to the costs of school fires provided by the NFPA.

c Data from HEW's National Center for Education Statistics.

attendance (ADA) of all enrolled pupils of the same period. Thus it cannot be suggested that increases in fires correlated with increases in pupils, and it must be concluded that students were undertaking a greater intensity of activity. Figure 2 confirms this.

Data collected by the NFPA were grouped into two categories: first, fires resulting from faulty wiring, misued equipment, etc.; second, fires (termed "incendiary" by NFPA) resulting from willful or accidental human acts. The shift over time away from electrical fires and toward incendiary fires further suggested increased student involvement over time in the origin of the blazes (i.e., Strom, 1974). Figure 3 shows the changing percent of school fires exclusively of incendiary origin and also displays the concurrent decrease in the numbers of the nation's schools.[9]

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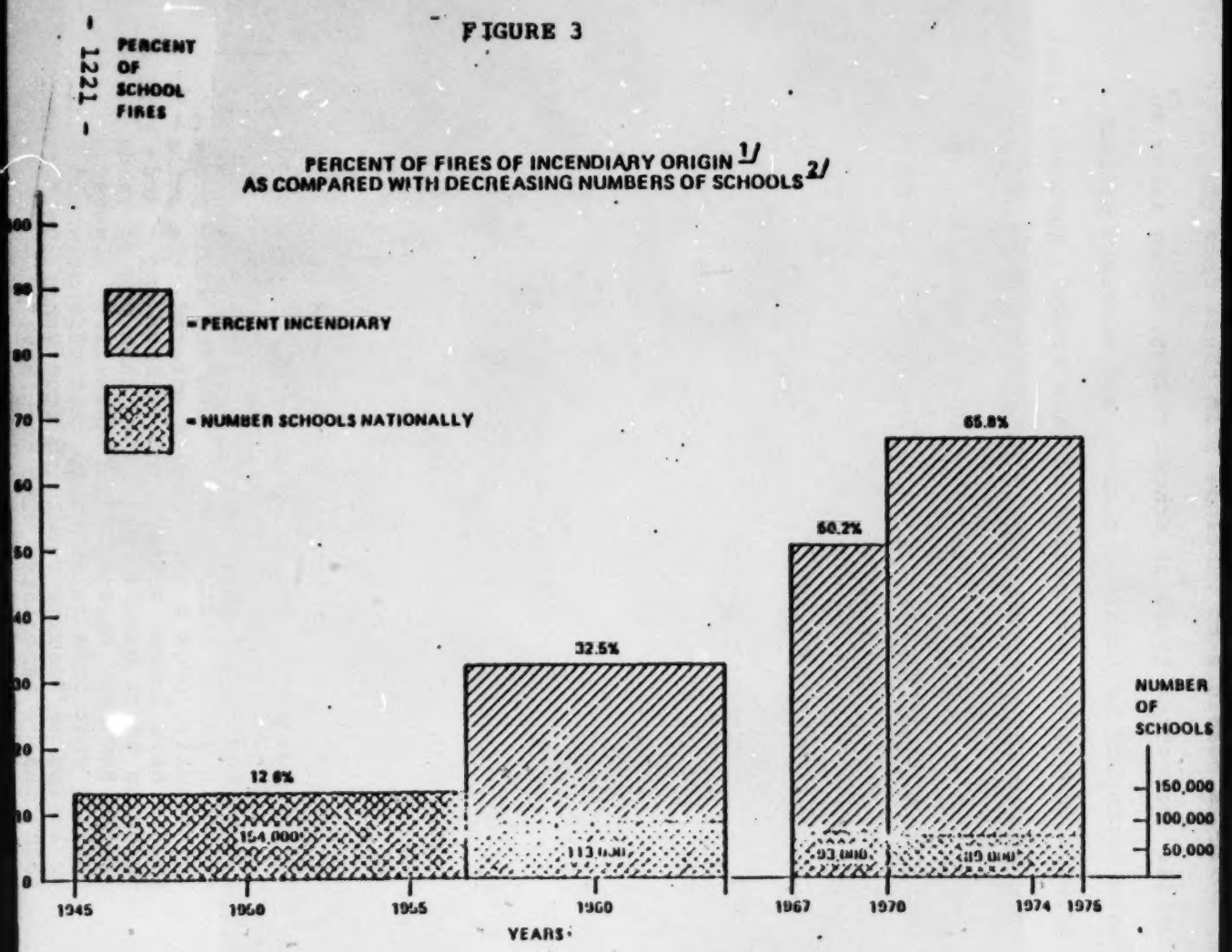
[9] One caveat goes with data relating to decreases in the number of the nation's schools. "Schools" were entities made up of one or more buildings: HEW's National Center for Education Statistics only retrieved information relating to the number of such institutions. It was not possible, then, to determine whether the gross numbers of the nation's schoolbuildings had changed. That information would have been helpful in refining conclusions made about increases in the number of fires in relation to decreases in the number of "schools."

FIGURE 3



SOURCES: 1. NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION ESTIMATES.
2. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE:
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS.

It is possible to conclude from these data that, unlike some other types of school crimes, arson seems to have increased in absolute numbers and absolute dollar amounts throughout the period of this study. Further, fires account for the single greatest percentage of the overall crime costs, as will be seen even more clearly when we address crime costs later in this work.

Vandalism

Vandalism was the most common school offense, and, after fires, the most costly.[10] The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports defines "vandalism" as the "willful or malicious destruction, injury, disfigurement, or defacement of property without consent of the owner or person having custody or control" (U.S. Department of Justice, 1971, P. 58), and data on school vandalism, local or national, has seldom been so clearly defined. It has been unclear,

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10 The prevalence of vandalism was due, in part, to the vagueness of the word itself. Broken windows at a school were often considered "vandalism," even if the offender gained entry through them and stole property. Technically, once a building is entered, the authorities should have lodged a complaint of breaking - and- entering or of burglarly, rather than one of vandalism. If the security report read "vandalism," however, ensuing cost data relating to that offense would likely be listed as "damage resulting from vandalism," rather than "damage associated with burglary."

for example, whether acts of vandalism recorded by individual schools, school districts, or formal research studies represented willful or accidental vandalism (Ducey, 1978). In many cases, things were merely broken (Forer, 1970, p. 263), but no "merely broken" category ever existed for purposes of recording crime costs. Furthermore, there was nationwide--and sometimes even schoolwide--lack of agreement as to those acts included in the category of "vandalism." Additionally, there is reason to suspect that school administrators had to some extent not been wholly candid about the nature and extent of their vandalism losses, for, as in the case of many crimes, exposure might have led to censure by district officials or by the public (Dukiet, 1973).

Before discussing national costs of crime and vandalism, some very general indications of changes in the nature and extent of such problems should be shown. The earliest indication of citywide school vandalism problems that was uncovered in the course of this research came from Boston in 1952. As a result of a school crime wave in Boston in 1952, the following year saw a united campaign to reduce vandalism in schools mounted by school officials. As a result, "the cases of breaking and entering public schools and the resulting vandalism was reduced from 78 cases in

1952 to 22 cases in 1953" (U . S. Senate, 1957). As a more current indication of the extent of the problem, the cost of vandalism in Boston was reported to have reached $535,000 by 1967 (Olson & Carpenter, 1971, p.4). By calendar year 1975, Mr. Anthony L. Galeota, Chief Structural Engineer, Department of Planning and Engineering, Boston Public Schools, placed the dollar loss due to vandalism, arson, and theft at about 1 million dollars ($620,000 constant-1967).

In Los Angeles, for another example, where malicious mischief had been a separate category since the early 1950s, offense counts went from 335 in 1952 down to 100 in the 1958 school year and up to 1,275 in the 1973 school year. Also in Los Angeles, the combined vandalism-and-theft property loss climbed 2,829 percent from $38,431 in the academic year of 1950 to $1,112,784 in the 1974 academic year (Green, 1976).

While the Boston and Los Angeles examples just cited addressed overall questions of the <u>extent</u> of change in the frequency and cost of school vandalism over time, another example addresses the often overlooked issue of changes in the <u>nature</u> of acts reported as "vandalism." In Mesa, Arizona, as the loss due to vandalism rose from $.58 per

pupil in the 1972 academic year to $1.29 per pupil in the 1973 academic year, the cost of window replacement and repair became prohibitive. The school system at that point turned first to bulletproof polycarbon replacements for the glass, but the youths soon realized they could burn such windows with cigarettes, ignite them entirely with lighter fluid, or scratch words in them with sharp objects. Mesa, Arizona's experimental alternative to the polycarbons, as reported by Neill (1975, p. 34), was sheet aluminum. As mentioned previously, such dramatic actions as Mesa's covering school windows is an indication of increased intensity of student actions against schools. It should be noted, parenthetically, that Mesa, Arizona, is a suburban school district where, according to the literature of the early 1970s, vandalism problems were less severe than in urban-core schools.

National Figures on the Costs of School Crimes

Few groups in the last decade have developed estimates of the costs of school crime on a national basis. This is surprising, in light of the extraordinary press coverage usually accorded these figures when they are released. It has been possible, therefore, to trace all references of cost estimates to the very few sources which originally developed them. Most are included here.

In 1969, the U.S. Office of Education estimated that vandalism accounted for about 100 million dollars in losses nationally. (In this case, as in a number of the following references, "vandalism" included arson and theft.)

In 1970, the National Education Association raised the estimate of national losses to 200 million dollars, and the National School Public Relations Association used these figures in their first report on this subject in 1971 (Wells, 1971).

Two other groups making estimates of the national costs of crime and violence were the National Association of School Security Directors (NASSD), and the publication, School Product News, edited by David Slaybaugh. The NASSD survey encompassed all costs of crime in schools, but was unable to control for intradistrict reporting variations or for incomplete or nonreturned surveys. Further, the NASSD cost estimate of 594 million dollars developed that extrapolation based on a relatively small response rate from security directors who themselves represented only a portion of the nation's school districts. The Slaybaugh survey--conducted annually since 1970-- had a different problem. Although a much more scientifically conducted

study, and although carefully designed and well analyzed, its annual response rate ranged between only 15 and 17 percent, making the conclusions difficult to support. The bottom line, however, was that in the same year NASSD estimated crime costs at 594 million dollars, School Product News projected national costs of vandalism, arson, and theft at 100.4 million dollars (see Slaybaugh, 1975).[11] The figure developed from the School Product News calculations tends to confirm the 1973 findings by the Educational Research Service, Inc., that the national costs were about 82.2 million dollars.[12]

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11 This extrapolation is made possible by combining information provided from HEW's National Center for Education Statistics (that in the Fall of 1974 there were 1,894 school districts in the country with enrollments of 5,000 or more pupils) and Slaybaugh's finding that the average cost of crime per school district of that size was $53,000.

12 The Consumer Price Index value difference between 1973 and 1974 is 0.09885. To compare the two study figures on national costs of crime, multiply 100.4 times 0.09885 and subtract the results from 100.4. The resulting number--90.5--is seen closely to approximate the 82.2 estimate by Educational Research Service, Inc. as to the 1973 costs of crime. The difference between 82.2 and 90.5 can be readily attributed to absolute changes in the costs of crime from 1973 to 1974, or to small differences in the sample selection. (The analytical caveat here is that the 1973 study was for all school districts enrolling over 300 pupils, whereas the 1974 study was for all school districts having more than 5,000 pupils. There is no prima facie reason not to compare these figures, for close analysis of crime costs indicates that, while larger districts had much more vandalism, smaller districts had higher fire loss--possibly due to slower rural response time by fire companies--and so the sample population variable may cancel out.

It is unclear why the NASSD figures of an estimated 594 million dollars per year were so much higher than those of other studies; however, the author of this paper speculates that discrepancies may have been due to the possibility that different divisions of school district offices filled out the different questionnaires. Whereas the NASSD surveys were completed by the Office of School Security, other surveys may have been sent there or to custodial or insurance divisions.

Summary, Conclusions, and Extrapolations

Summary

This paper has addressed two broad questions: first, to what extent could changes in the reporting of crimes that occurred as offices of school security were formed throughout the country be linked to changes in the public's attitudes about crimes in schools; second, what trends about the nature and extent of crimes in secondary schools could be developed from the available data?

In response to the first question, there is a significant liklihood that changes in reporting procedures did, in fact, give a vastly distorted impression of the problem, and a strong case can be made that an increase in certain offenses--especially vandalism-- occurred in the mid - to

late 1960s rather than in the 1970s. In response to the second question, the findings were as follows: with respect to assaults against teachers, errors in data interpretation, combined with drastically increasing numbers of assaults (while rates of assault held constant), gave the public an impression of an increased intensity that cannot be substantiated by data; with respect to vandalism, burglary, larceny, and arson, however, there is every reason to believe that the absolute rates of incidents have increased, although, as noted, just when they increased is subject to question.

In relation to vandalism, theft, and burglary, it was noted that these offenses began increasing in the same period during which value of all school property also increased, and during which more and more pupils were in fewer and fewer schools. It was also found that dollar loss caused by fires were indeed increasing more rapidly than was the aggregate value of school property, and that fires were often the single most costly loss suffered by a school or a school district.

Conclusions

The overall conclusion reached by the author is that the hard proof of changes in incidence of specific crimes that this paper has provided is not necessary to make a

determination that the nature and extent of school crimes have changed over time. It is clear that in the 1950s cities had virtually no need for school security offices, while they did need such offices by 1975. It is clear that damage done to schools by vandalism was not great enough in 1950 to receive the national attention it received in 1975. It is clear that in 1950, teachers and pupils did not fear their schools as they often did in 1975. That the data are imperfect in no way inhibits us from concluding that the kinds, frequency, intensity, and costs of school crimes increased out of proportion to increases in the pupil population in this period, and that the fear of crime--particularly in the nation's urban schools--often was of such a magnitude as virtually to prevent learning from taking place.

In addition to this general tone-setting conclusion, four important specific conclusions have been reached.[13]

First, as suspensions without due process and other potential violations of pupil rights grew more and more extensive in the late 1960s, pupils increasingly responded by suing the schools for violating their Constitutional rights. By the early 1970s, schools reacted by complying with the legal rulings and also by developing new due process procedures to safeguard against further court

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13 The logic behind some of these points is too lengthy to present here. The reader is again referred to the basic work from which this paper has been taken.

action. An outgrowth of this process, however, was that administrations became increasingly cautious about who was suspended and about what offenses warranted suspension. Increasingly disruptive behavior became tolerated in schools, since suspension mechanisms were now under the watchful eye of the courts. This syndrome may very likely lead to increased fear of crime in schools, as this cycle crests. The crest should be noticeable in the actions of courts; the author predicts that they will begin modifying their rulings in favor of increased school administration of discipline with less attention on procedural due process.

Second, as threats of pupil disruptions and riots swept down from colleges to secondary schools in the late 1960s, school districts--especially in large urban areas--established school security offices to help cope with these disturbances and with increasing instances of student crime.

These offices of school security, which represented bureaucratic responses to behavioral problems, were notably more successful in controlling property crime than personal crime.[14] One major reason for security offices' success in controlling property crime is that, as school personnel came to view pupil activity as becoming increasingly criminal, especially in the areas of vandalism, arson, and burglary, security offices responded by developing intrusion-detection systems with central office monitors designed to reduce the incidence of such offenses. As acts of property crime were reduced, personal crime became more noticeable, and issues of student and staff fear of crime took on a new dimension. Thus, by the end of the studied period, the fear of crime and violence was the leading issue in urban schools.

Third, as the value of all school property increased, as the number and percent of enrolled pupils attending schools increased, and as the value of the dollar decreased, both the numbers and the costs of vandalism, arson, and burglary increased. It is not surprising, then, that

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14 The inability of school security offices to solve basic behavioral problems of youths is a pragmatic issue. The mandate of most security offices is to control behavior deemed either unacceptable or illegal, whereas such behavior on the part of pupils may well be a visible manifestation of broader social or educational ills. The difference, then, between attacking the cause
(note: Continued on next page)

as property values and exposure to - risk increased, schools reported more frequent damage at greater apparent total cost.

Fourth, decisions made without pupil involvement invited counteractions by the pupils. The importance of seeking student input cannot be overemphasized. Unless and until school personnel involve students, through whatever means suit the situation, in the development of actions purportedly geared to helping pupils, it is hard to see how solutions can be found. It is only the stop-gap measures that do not require communication between students and staff. Examples of such stop-gap measures addressed primarily to symptoms rather than causes were seen in the establishment of school security offices in the late 1960s in response to student riots and disorders.

Extrapolations

Probable Future Student Actions. In urban areas, gang activity--and the accompanying fear of such activity--is likely further to complicate the educational machinery. Additionally, as security offices continue to reduce

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14 of the problem and attacking the manifestation of the problem will forever be reflected in the inability of the school security office actually to solve behavioral problems of students.

property crimes (vandalism, theft, burglary, arson), the ratio of personal-to-property offenses will change in such a way as to give the appearance of a shift in the nature of criminal acts in which pupils are engaged. This phenomenon will become highly publicized, but solutions will not be forthcoming because, among other reasons, security planners will overlook the changing ratios due to successful property crime prevention and will ascribe the altered condition to changes in absolute incidence of offenses. In suburban areas, the increased cost of replacement and repair of vandalized schools will focus attention on that topic. More and more offices of school security will be formed to cope with "the new suburban student vandal." Security services will, however, be able to reduce absolute levels of property crimes, so the issue of whether or not there really was a problem in the first place will become moot.

Probable Future Actions Taken by Local Schools. The long trend in the erosion of in loco parentis powers of schools will have lasting impact on teachers and pupils. Because of such erosion, teachers, in an attempt to maintain control of classes, are likely slightly, and possibly subconsciously, to misuse grades. Instead of using superior grades to reward academic performance alone,

teachers will tend to give grades for a mixture of educational achievement and good behavior. The pupil's anger and tension will then increase, challenges to the legitimacy of schools will increase, and so the functional ability of schools will decrease. And the public--recalling wasted tax dollars, wasted youths, wasted warnings by educators, and rampant school crime--will support the students. This syndrome may well constitute the most serious behavior-related problem facing schools in the near future.

Probable Futures for School Security Offices. Although originally formed primarily to reduce incidence and costs of acts of crime and violence in schools, school security offices will increasingly be used to reduce the fear of crime and to form a liaison with pupils in classroom settings. Such liaisons may occur in the form of classroom instruction (for example, in classes such as "The Law and You") or in the form of school programs (for example, "Student - Security Advisory Groups"). Also, city and/or county officials will probably begin to ask that certain public buildings and facilities be added to the school's security network. Facilities such as libraries and city storage buildings would probably be among the first of these additions.

Ultimately, of course, solutions will have to be found to the striking increases in pupil misbehavior over the past quarter-century. The public cannot, and doubtless will not, long overlook a continuation of the current trends toward greater lawlessness in the schools. A technologically - based society which requires a continual supply of increasingly capable and well-educated citizens to continue national growth will not long be able to sit passively while a relatively small percentage of adolescents brings the entire educational system to its knees.

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